

Shaykh Zayid, the founder of the United Arab Emirates, who passed away last week. He was a wise leader, and America joins the people of the UAE in honoring his memory.

For Muslims in America and around the world, Ramadan is a special time of reflection, fasting, and charity. It is a time to think of the less fortunate and to share God's gifts with those in need. It is a time of spiritual growth and prayer, and the heartfelt prayers offered by Muslims across America are a blessing for our whole Nation.

Ramadan is also a time for togetherness and thanksgiving. And Muslims gather to break the fast, and there is so much to be thankful for. I know you're thankful for your families and communities, and we all pray for their safety and happiness in the year ahead. Here in America, Muslims also think of their brothers and sisters in distant lands where lives are being lifted up by liberty and by hope.

In Iraq, families are observing this holy month in a free society. After enduring decades of tyranny and fear, the Iraqi people are guiding their nation toward democracy. And this January, they will choose their leaders in a free election.

In Afghanistan, brave men and women have transformed a country, and they have inspired our world. Just over 3 years ago, the Taliban Government controlled Afghanistan. They harbored terrorists and denied basic rights to millions of citizens. And today, the Taliban is gone from power. Women have their freedom. Girls go to school. And last month, the people of Afghanistan stood in long lines to cast their vote in a free election.

The elections in Afghanistan and Iraq will be counted as landmark events in the history of liberty. And America will always be proud of our efforts to bring liberty and hope to those nations. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Over the next 4 years, we'll work to ensure that the gift of freedom reaches more men and women in the broader Middle East. By working with leaders in that region, we can advance reform and change in a vital part of the world. And as we do so, we'll build a better future for all mankind.

As we defend liberty and justice abroad, we must honor those values here at home. At our founding, America made a commitment to justice and tolerance, and we keep that commitment today. We reject ethnic and religious bigotry in every form. We strive for a welcoming society that honors the life and faith of every person. We will always protect the most basic human freedom, the freedom to worship the Almighty God without any fear.

In recent years, Americans of many faiths have come to learn more about our Muslim brothers and sisters. And the more we learn, the more we find that our commitments are broadly shared. As Americans, we all share a commitment to family, to protect and to love our children. We share a belief in God's justice and man's moral responsibility. We share the same hope for a future of peace. We have so much in common and so much to learn from one another.

Once again, I wish you a blessed Ramadan. I want to thank you for joining us at the White House for this Iftaar, and may God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. on the State Floor at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Imam Faizul Khan, administrator, Islamic Society of the Washington Area.

### **Statement on the Death of Yasser Arafat**

*November 10, 2004*

The death of Yasser Arafat is a significant moment in Palestinian history. We express our condolences to the Palestinian people. For the Palestinian people, we hope that the future will bring peace and the fulfillment of their aspirations for an independent, democratic Palestine that is at peace with its neighbors. During the period of transition that is ahead, we urge all in the region and throughout the world to join in helping make progress toward these goals and toward the ultimate goal of peace.

**Remarks at a Veterans Day  
Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia**  
*November 11, 2004*

Thank you for that warm welcome. Laura and I are honored to be here today. Mr. Secretary, thank you for your kind introduction, and thank you for your strong leadership in making sure our veterans have got the very best care possible. Secretary Principi has done a fantastic job for the American veteran.

I thank the members of my Cabinet who have joined us today. I appreciate the Chiefs of Staff and other members of the United States military who have joined us. I want to thank all the veterans who are here today. I want to thank the representatives of veterans organizations. And I want to thank my fellow Americans.

Veterans Day is set aside to remember every man and woman who has taken up arms to defend our country. We honor every soldier, sailor, airman, marine, and coast-guardsmen who gave some of the best years of their lives to the service of the United States and stood ready to give life, itself, on our behalf. Twenty-five million military veterans walk among us, and on this day, our Nation thanks them all.

These are the hidden heroes of a peaceful nation, our colleagues and friends, neighbors and family members who answered the call and returned to live in the land they defended.

Our veterans are drawn from several generations and many backgrounds. They're Americans who remember the swift conflict of the Persian Gulf war and a long cold war vigil, the heat of Vietnam and the bitter cold of Korea. They are veterans in their eighties who served under MacArthur and Eisenhower and saved the liberty of the world. And still with us in the year 2004 are a few dozen Americans who fought the Kaiser's army and celebrated the end of the Great War on this day in 1918. The last doughboys are all more than 100 years old. Our Nation will always be proud of their service.

Some of our veterans are young men and women with recent memories of battle in mountains and in deserts. In Afghanistan, these brave Americans helped sweep away

a vicious tyranny allied with terror and prepared the way for a free people to elect its own leaders. In Iraq, our men and women fought a ruthless enemy of America, setting the people free from a tyrant who now sits in a prison cell.

All who have served in this cause are liberators in the best tradition of America. Their actions have made our Nation safer in a world full of new dangers. Their actions have also upheld the ideals of America's founding, which defines us still. Our Nation values freedom, not just for ourselves but for all. And because Americans are willing to serve and sacrifice for this cause, our Nation remains the greatest force for good among all the nations on the Earth.

Some of tomorrow's veterans are in combat in Iraq at this hour. They have a clear mission, to defeat the terrorists and aid the rise of a free government that can defend itself. They are performing that mission with skill and with honor. They are making us proud. They are winning.

Our men and women in the military have superb training and the best equipment and able commanders. And they have another great advantage: They have the example of American veterans who came before. From the very day George Washington took command, the uniform of the United States has always stood for courage and decency and shining hope in a world of darkness. And all who have worn that uniform have won the thanks of the American people.

Today we're thinking of our fellow Americans last seen on duty, whose fate is still undetermined. We will not rest until we have made the fullest possible accounting for every life.

Today we also recall the men and women who did not live to be called veterans, many of whom rest in these hills. Our veterans remember the faces and voices of fallen comrades. The families of the lost carry a burden of grief that time will lighten but never lift. Our whole Nation honors every patriot who placed duty and country before their own lives. They gave us every day that we live in freedom. The security of America depends on our active leadership in the world to oppose emerging threats and to spread freedom that leads to the peace we all want. And our